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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 003001

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGERFO
USAID FOR KUNDER/MCCLOUD/BORODIN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: MGGZ01 - ISRAELI GAZA INCURSION - JERUSALEM JULY
17 SITREP

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) IDF forces reentered northern Gaza on July 17; at least two Palestinians have been reported killed in this latest incursion. IAF aircraft struck government buildings, and supported ongoing operations in northern Gaza. There were approximately 15 Qassam launches from Gaza, with damage but no injuries reported. In the West Bank, one IDF soldier was killed and several wounded in Nablus. President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) has reached out to Hamas on ways to resolve the prisoner issue and the need to de-link the crises in Gaza and Lebanon. Abu Mazen also commented to the press about forming a National Unity Government after the current crisis is over. Post continues its efforts to facilitate the departure of 160 American citizens from Gaza, which may occur via the Erez checkpoint on July 19. PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat announced that the Rafah border crossing will be open on July 18 to permit the one-way flow of Palestinians into Gaza. The Karni crossing is open as of July 17; details of shipments that entered Gaza on July 16 are in paragraph ¶11. The Nahal Oz fuel transport point is open, despite Qassam rocket attacks in the vicinity.

Military Developments

¶2. (SBU) IDF armored forces and infantry re-entered northern Gaza on July 17 and took up positions in the populated area of Beit Hanoun, next to the town's main health center. Two Palestinian gunmen were reported killed. IAF aircraft struck the PA Ministry of Foreign Affairs building and a structure used by the Interior Ministry on July 16; heavy damage was reported to both structures. IAF aircraft on July 17 were reported to have fired at least 5 missiles at Palestinian gunmen in three simultaneous engagements.

¶3. (SBU) At least 11 rockets were fired from Gaza toward the Nahal Oz fuel transfer point. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility. Also, the Izzedin al-Qassam brigades of Hamas took responsibility for two other Qassam rocket firings on July 16. Qassam strikes on July 17 reportedly damaged an apartment building in Sderot and a kibbutz in the Negev; no injuries were reported.

¶4. (C) On July 16, unknown gunmen shot killed Preventive

Security Organization officer Mohammed Zaki Dahlan, a cousin of PLC member Mohammed Dahlan. Fatah sources believe Hamas was behind the attack. Previously, Hamas-Fatah violence had dipped in the wake of Israeli incursions into Gaza and Lebanon.

¶15. (C) In the West Bank city of Nablus, one IDF soldier was killed by a bomb and several others wounded by gunfire in an attack near the casbah on July 17. Following the attack, the IDF arrested at least 11 Palestinians and imposed a total closure on the city. Local sources in Nablus informed political specialist that the al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigades in Nablus claimed responsibility, and said the attack was an act of solidarity with Hizbollah. In other parts of the West Bank, IDF raids continue.

Political Developments

¶16. (C) Sources in the office of President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) told political specialist that the President has passed messages to the Hamas leadership in Gaza indicating that he is initiating contacts with the GOI to secure the release of Palestinian prisoners. The message also stressed the need to delink the situation in Gaza from that of Lebanon and expressed concern about Hamas statements linking the two situations. On July 16, armed factions in Gaza announced "Operation Light," in which the Hamas military wing, PIJ, PRC, and al-Aqsa announced that rockets will be fired and other means of resistance employed in support of Hizbollah.

¶17. (SBU) Abu Mazen told reporters on July 16 that the time is approaching to form a National Unity Government, but that such a government would be formed after the current crisis is over. Abu Mazen also said the two envoys who had been sent to Damascus returned empty-handed (septel).

¶18. (SBU) Hamas PLC member Mushier al-Masri publicly criticized the outcome of the Arab League Foreign Ministers' meeting, and took particular aim at the choice of Yasser Abed Rabbo as the head of the Palestinian delegation. Masri took issue with Abed Rabbo's selection, asking why Abu Mazen had sent someone "with no support to represent the Palestinian people" and had not instead chosen elected officials.

AMCIT Update

¶19. (C) Post continues its efforts to facilitate the departure of approximately 160 American citizens from Gaza. GOI liaison indicates that the departure may occur on Wednesday, July 19, via the Erez checkpoint.

Humanitarian Update

¶10. (SBU) Crossings: The Kerem Shalom and Sufa crossings remain closed. The Rafah passenger crossing remains closed. PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat told the media that the Rafah border crossing will be open on Tuesday, July 18, between 0800 and 1600 to allow Palestinians stranded on the Egyptian side of the border to return to Gaza. Erekat said the arrangement will only be for those coming to Gaza, and said it would be a first step toward allowing crossing in both directions.

¶11. (SBU) The Karni/al-Mintar commercial crossing opened as of 1000 on July 17, and 100 trucks entered Gaza by 1300 local, according to local PalTrade staff. On July 16, Karni processed 164 inbound truckloads of mainly food, according to USAID Gaza-based field staff, including:

- 8 truckloads of wheat (307 tons);
- 6 truckloads of flour (140 tons);
- 6 truckloads of rice (160 tons);

- 9 truckloads of sugar (329 tons);
- 7 truckloads of cooking oil (119 tons);
- 33 truckloads of fruits and vegetables;
- 11 truckloads of dairy products;
- 6 truckloads of medical supplies;
- 10 truckloads of frozen food;
- 29 truckloads of carious products;
- 9 truckloads of livestock;
- 23 truckloads of animal feed (506 tons);
- 15 containers for the WFP (86 tons of flour) and UNRWA (44 tons of flour, 87 tons of rice, 230 tons of sugar, 150 tons of cooking oil).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reportedly received 35,000 liters of diesel through the Karni/al-Mintar crossing July 16 and plans to receive an additional 35,000 liters July 17.

¶12. (SBU) The Nahal Oz fuel transfer station is operational on July 17 and was open July 16. The following fuel products were imported July 16:

- 600,000 liters of diesel;
- 100,000 liters of gasoline; and
- 168 tons of cooking gas.

¶13. (SBU) Electricity: According to USAID Gaza-based field staff, all ten medium-tension electricity feeder lines into Gaza are operational, July 17, and providing Gaza with 110 MW of electricity

WALLES